

**Remarks:**

This is a reply to the office action of April 2, 2004, in which claims 13 - 24 were rejected as indefinite. The examiner found claim 13 to be inconsistent with dependent claims 14 - 20, and identified other technical errors. Claims 13 - 16 and 23 - 24 were also rejected as obvious over Holland or Kowarski in view of Kuhn et al. or Mohan et al. Claims 17 - 22 were found to contain allowable matter.

In the amended claims above, the subject matter of claims 15 to 18 has been incorporated into claims 13. Claims 24 has been canceled, and claims 25 - 26 have been added. Support for new claim 25 is found in claim 6 as originally filed. Claim 26 is supported by the specification, page 6, third paragraph.

It is the object of the present invention to provide a device for processing several samples held in sample vessels and thereby effectively prevent the mixing of the samples via the gas phase (see page 2, second paragraph of the application as filed). This object is solved with a device according to the amended claim 13. The same object is solved with a device according to new claim 26, whose subject matter was implicitly contained in former claim 13.

Inasmuch as claims 14 - 25 depend from claim 13, which now includes subject matter (claims 17 and 18) previously found patentable, we respectfully submit that claims 13 - 26 are in condition for allowance.

Respectfully,



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